

# LONDON J'OUVERT 2009



## The History of J'Ouvert

For than a century J'Ouvert (pronounced 'Jouvay' meaning 'day break') processions have marked the opening of the famous Trinidad Carnival. Held in the wee hours of Carnival Monday, J'Ouvert evolved from 19th century Canboulay festivals, these night time celebrations saw ex-slaves gather to masquerade, sing, and dance in commemoration of their emancipation.

When this tradition was incorporated into Trinidad's pre-lent Carnival, it became an arena for African-derived percussion, sardonic costuming, and, more recently, lively steel band music with revellers jumping, dancing and shouting – fuelled by copious amounts of alcohol and the ambience of the occasion. The 2004 Notting Hill Carnival saw the revival of London's Jouvart when Stardust, London All Stars and Ebony steel orchestras took to the road at 6.a.m filling the air with the sweet sounds of steel.

In contrast to the bright, fancy pageantry of Sunday afternoon and Monday Carnival, J'Ouvert's gruesome devils and mud-covered revellers manifest Carnival's deepest challenge to order and authority, and fully depicts the essence of the Emancipation spirit. In keeping with J'Ouvert traditions of humour and macabre, numerous individuals play mud mas (covering their bodies with mud), dress in old rags, paint their faces, bodies and costumes, and cover themselves with white powder and flour. Many masquerade in satanic costumes, while others don satirical outfits and carry signs with humorous political commentary. Tubs of mud on make shift trolleys were wheeled down Ladbroke Grove, with revellers stopping every so often to smear each other or innocent bystanders.

## The London J'Ouvert

Six years since its revival, London Jouvart celebrations saw Ladbroke Grove invaded by revellers adorning themselves in mud, powder or brightly coloured paint depicting the celebration of emancipation. The pre-dawn tranquility was broken by the sweet strains of steel band music in West London and saw masses of people chipping down the Grove in true Trinidadian style.

This all steelband event provided lively steel band music which is well received by the public and is growing in popularity. The British Association of Steelbands continue to work laboriously to ensure its growth is sustained through the inclusion of more steelbands and masqueraders and become an important ingredient of the fabric of Notting Hill Carnival.

The 2009 celebration started with the procession leaving the Sainsbury's car park at the top end of Ladbroke Grove around 6:00 a.m. **Ebony, Real Steel and a vibrant Rhythm section with Pan Podium's Robbie Joseph doing his bit on the cowbell. As the bands snaked along Ladbroke Grove the revellers swelled to great numbers filling the air with a mist of powder and flour.**

## The Future of London Jouvart

Real Steel were victorious with their Leroy Clarke's rendition of 'Love Me Tender' in the 'Bomb' competition (tune of choice), leaving revellers begging for more when the bacchanal came to an end at 9:00 a.m.(over an hour before the scheduled finish time owing to the strict marshalling by the police officers in attendance). More BAS bands will be attendance next year to ensure that the competition is well contested and to challenge Real Steel and London All Stars winning records. Everyone is looking forward to an even more successful Jouvart in 2010 and BAS continues to work laboriously to ensure its growth is sustained through closer working relationships with the various Carnival bodies.

### BAS J'OUVERT BOMB COMPETITION

- 1st - **Real Steel** with "Love Me Tender"
- 2nd - **Ebony Steelband** with "Don't Know Why"